

CONFIDENTIAL

11 February 1954

Mr. J. T. Campbell, Head
BBC Monitoring Service
Caversham Park
Reading, Berks., England

Dear Mr. Campbell:

We have carefully examined our position with regard to the question you raise in your letter of 29 January 1954 concerning the sale of a wire service to various press agencies.

It is our feeling that no FBIS monitored material should be included in a wire service to which commercial press agencies are allowed to subscribe. We have only recently refused to extend our wire service to a private concern. Our reasons for this position are that a U.S. Government agency would be subject to severe criticism from the press at large were it discovered that material which is procured through American monitoring and which is paid for by the American taxpayer, was subsequently released to selected news agencies. It has been our constant position that any FBIS service which is available to one private interest must be available to all. Your plan would, of course, exclude all press agencies not large enough or fortunate enough to have a London office.

While we fully recognize that we have no right to object to your handling BBC Monitoring Service material in any way that you see fit, we feel constrained to point out that a policy of giving commercial press agencies equal treatment in the speedy release of information could jeopardize the effectiveness of the BBC and the VOA. Also I fear that if the commercial press agencies are consistent in reporting Moscow broadcast before FBIS in Washington is able to report to the American intelligence agencies and the Department of State, our effectiveness will be reduced inasmuch as these agencies will then be unable to prepare official statements and replies in advance of the general news break. This could conceivably result in a fiscal set back which would affect us both.

As for terminating service to AP and UP in favor of an exclusive service to Reuters should you decide that some wire service is necessary, we do not feel that we are in a position to advise you on this matter. I can foresee, however, that the AP and UP might very well ask for an exclusive service on FBIS monitored material. We would, of course, refuse this request, but it would open the way for questions as to why the BBC was supporting Reuters while the American press agencies could not get the equal support from the American monitoring service, thereby placing the American press services at a disadvantage in the competitive field of news.

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[redacted] will visit you for several days beginning 8 March and will discuss this further with you at that time. We are also securing an informal evaluation of the Baltic material so that he can advise you of the American reaction to the Stockholm operation.

Sincerely,

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AMW:jb
O & 1 - Add
1 - AMW
1 - Exec

(Retype of letter of 11 February -- misrouted to Oki. Bureau)

3/1/54

POLITICAL

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